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APRIL FOOLS.

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No. 26.

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PUBLISHER.
NEW YORK.

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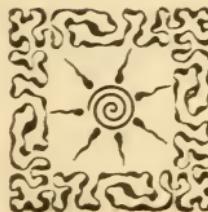
APRIL FOOLS

A FARCE IN ONE ACT
FOR THREE MALE CHARACTERS

BY

W. F. CHAPMAN

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APRIL FOOLS.

CAST OF CHARACTERS.

MR. PETER DUNNBROWNE	{ <i>A gentleman with several marriageable daughters.</i>	
MR. JAMES SMITH		<i>Who wants to buy a horse.</i>
MR. JOSEPH SMITH.		<i>An undertaker.</i>

TIME OF REPRESENTATION—THIRTY MINUTES.

ARGUMENT OF THE PLAY.

MR. PETER DUNNBROWNE, a gentleman with several unmarried daughters on his hands, receives a note from MR. JOHN SMITH proposing for his daughter Fanny. Presently MR. JAMES SMITH calls, he having received a letter announcing that Mr. D's mare Fanny is for sale, and an amusing dialogue at cross purposes ensues. This disposed of, MR. JOSEPH SMITH, an undertaker, calls, he having been notified that Miss Fanny had suddenly died, and another puzzle follows. Finally it is discovered that the letters are all in the same handwriting, and that the receivers have all been made the victims of an April joke.

COSTUMES.

DUNNBROWNE.—Everyday suit.

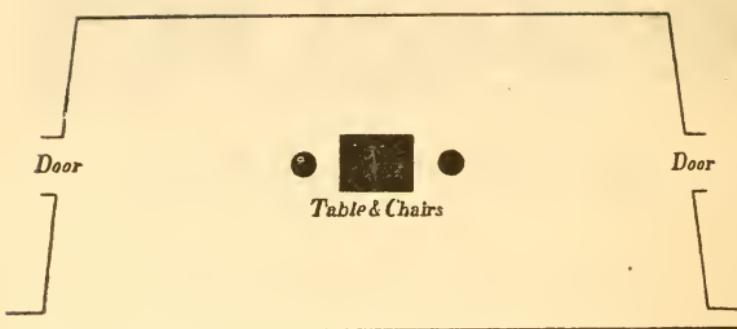
JAMES SMITH.—Very loud "horsey" dress. Carries hat and cane.

JOSEPH SMITH.—Shabby black suit, old black silk hat, black gloves, rusty old cotton umbrella.

PROPERTIES.

Newspaper and several letters on table. Large black bordered letter for JOSEPH SMITH. One letter each for JAMES SMITH and DUNNBROWNE to produce. Bottle containing cold tea to represent wine, corkscrew and two glasses for DUNNBROWNE to bring on.

SCENE.



SCENE.—DUNNBROWNE's parlor. Doors r. and l. Table c., with chairs r. and l. of it.

N. B.—A set scene is not essential, and may be dispensed with if preferred.

STAGE DIRECTIONS.

In observing, the player is supposed to face the audience. R. means right; L., left; C., centre; R. C., right of centre; L. C., left of centre; R. D., right door; L. D., left door; UP STAGE, towards the back; DOWN STAGE, towards the audience.





APRIL FOOLS.

Scene.—DUNNBROWNE'S *parlor*. Entrances R. and L. Table, c. Chairs R. and L. of table. Newspaper and letters on the table.

Dunnbrowne. (*without*) Well, good morning, my dears. (*shows himself in the doorway R.*) Don't be away all the morning, and *do* be merciful in your purchases. (*enters R.*) Happy is the man who is not troubled with a trio of beautiful daughters, who are incessantly going out shopping. My daughters seem to take a delight in spending my money. I suppose they act upon the principle that, if a thing is worth doing at all it is worth doing well, and as shopping is their chief and only occupation, they strive, and I may add, succeed, to do it as well as any young ladies in this mundane sphere possibly could. (*sits R.*) I find it of no use whatever to expostulate with them about what I consider their extravagance in dress, for they argue that as they do all the buying and I do all the paying, it is nothing but a right and proper division of labor. Now let me see what trouble has come to me through that prodigious engine of commerce, the post office, this morning. (*opens a letter*) Another bill from Messrs. Newshape and Whitestraw, the milliners! It is only two weeks since I paid them \$25. (*looks at the bill*)—\$37.50 for millinery! Enough to provide me with hats for twenty years. (*opens another letter*) More bills! This is Mrs. Goodfit's bill for dressmaking: forty dollars. (*throws the bill on the table*) Oh, this is going a little beyond all reason. The fact of the matter is, I shall be ruined if this sort of thing is not stopped. (*walks across the room two or three times—then pauses*) I wish some kind, upright and steady young men of affluent means would come forward and take one or two of my daughters off my hands. I'm sure they would make excellent wives. (*sits R.,—takes another letter*) I am almost afraid to open this one; but I may as well know the extent of my trouble at once—suspense is useless—so here goes. (*opens the letter*) What's this? (*reads it over rapidly in silence*) How opportune! This is precisely what I have been wishing for. (*reads*) "Dear sir,—For a long period of time I have fondly and madly loved your daughter Fanny, with a passion that would require the prolific brain of a poet to describe, but I have never had the courage to declare my passion to her."

Well, that is astonishing. If I had known of this before I should have avoided paying some of her bills, for I would have had them married long ago. (*reads*) "My object in writing you is to inform you that I shall call upon you to-morrow morning, when I trust you will favor me with an interview." An interview! I'll favor him with forty interviews if he will only take one of my daughters off my hands. (*reads*) "My means are amply sufficient to justify my taking a wife, so I trust you will not throw cold water on my hopes, but make me eternally happy by giving your consent to our union." Throw cold water on his hopes! By no means. If *warm* water will help to bring about the desired effect he shall have gallons of it. (*reads*) "Hoping you will carefully consider this matter and ultimately arrive at a favorable decision, I am yours respectfully, John Smith." (*folding the letter*) John Smith, *umph*! Now, the question that arises is, who is this John Smith? John Smiths are almost as numerous as flies around a sugar-bowl, but I don't happen to be acquainted with any of them. However, I shall not be any wiser by wondering who he is, so I shall wait patiently until he calls. In the meantime I will take a walk around the garden. (*goes to door R.—calls*) Jane, I am going into the garden. If anyone calls, show him in here and let me know immediately. (*goes to the table*) By-the-bye I must put these bills out of sight. If John Smith chances to see them they might set him thinking of what he will have to pay when he gets married, and be the means of making him alter his mind. (*puts the letters in his pocket*)

Exit L.

Enter, JAMES SMITH, R.

Smith. (*speaks at the entrance*) Very well. I'll find a seat if you will find your master. (*Enters—looks around—sits, R.*) I wonder what sort of a fellow this Dunnbrowne is. I don't know anything about *him*, but he knows something about *me* or how would he be aware of the fact that I am in want of a mare. I hope there is no blunder about the affair. I don't see how there can be, though. The letter is addressed to me all fair and square, and this is the address the letter is dated from (*takes a letter from his pocket and reads*) "2, Belverley Terrace, Hedgetown, March 31st. Mr. Smith. Dear sir,—A friend of mine informs me that you are in want of a good mare, so I take the liberty of writing you to say that I wish to dispose of my thoroughbred dark bay mare Fanny. She has splendid action, and is in good condition. If you think she may suit you, I shall be at home in the morning, and will be glad to see you and give you any information respecting her soundness, &c. Yours truly, Peter Dunnbrowne." Oh, it's all right. There cannot be any error about that—of course not. I am rather fond of the name of Fanny. I had a mare of

that name some years ago, and she was a perfect stunner. (*replaces the letter in his pocket*) I wonder what price he wants for her. I am not particular to a few dollars if she's a good goer. (*takes up the newspaper*) What is there fresh in the paper this morning? Ah, another breach of promise case, I see. \$500 damages. Poor fellow. Nobody will catch *me* at that game. Marriage is out of my line altogether. I always drive clear of the ladies. (*turns the paper over—reads*)

Enter, DUNN., L.

Dunn. (*aside*) So this is John Smith, my would-be son-in-law. He appears to make himself quite at home. (*coming to the front, aloud*) Good morning, sir. Mr. Smith, I presume. (*extending his hand*) SMITH *hastily puts the newspaper down—rises and shakes hands*)

Smith. Good morning, Mr. Dunnbrown, how do you do, sir; how do you do? Delighted to make your acquaintance, sir. Fine morning this, isn't it? *Very fine morning indeed.*

Dunn. (*aside*) He doesn't seem at all bashful.

Smith. I beg your pardon? Ah, I thought you were speaking. You are well, I suppose?

Dunn. Ye—yes, I am quite well, thank you, Mr. Smith, how are you?

Smith. I'm *very* well, sir, very well indeed; in fact I am never troubled with any complaint excepting the complaints of my groom, and he is always full of them—servants usually are.

Dunn. (*aside*) Groom! he keeps a horse, then. He must be pretty well to do. (*aloud*) Take a seat, sir. (*they both sit, DUNN., L., SMITH, R.*)

Smith. Thanks. So you are desirous of disposing of Fanny, Mr. Dunnbrown?

Dunn. (*aside*) *Disposing of her!* (*aloud*) Well er—that is *one* way of putting it, but I scarcely like to—(*pause*)

Smith. Oh, I quite understand your feelings, sir. You have grown quite fond of her, and now you find it rather hard to part with her; but you'll soon get over that. I've parted with several in my time. Excuse my asking, sir, but what are your reasons for parting with her? Do you find her too expensive?

Dunn. Well er—rather; and as I have three of them to keep I—(*pause*)

Smith. I see—you thought you could possibly spare one of them. Well now, what are her good points? Is she good at jumping walls or fences?

Dunn. (*aside*) Walls! Fences!

Smith. Can she clear a five-barred gate nicely?

Dunn. (*smiling*) Well, er—I really could not answer that question. Jumping is an accomplishment that I—(*pause*)

Smith. Perhaps you never tried her at that sort of thing. You ought to, sir, it's fine sport. The last I had was a perfect stunner at it.

Dunn. (*aside*) The last he had! He has been married before, then—a widower, evidently.

Smith. She turned a little stubborn occasionally, though, and has thrown me over her head two or three times.

Dunn. (*aside*) Bless me! what a powerful woman she must have been.

Smith. I cured her of that nasty trick after she had repeated it a time or two, I did so. I gave her the lash pretty freely.

Dunn. (*aside*) Why, the man is nothing less than a wife-beater.

Smith. She soon found out who was master. There's nothing so effective as the whip to cure stubbornness, sir, nothing at all.

Dunn. I suppose not; but don't you think that kind of treatment is rather too harsh?

Smith. Oh, dear no; on the contrary, I think a little now and again does them a power of good.

Dunn. (*aside*) What a hard hearted fellow he must be. He will have to alter his opinions before he marries my daughter, that he will. (*aloud*) I may tell you, Mr. Smith, that if I thought you would ill-treat Fanny at all, I should not allow you to take her.

Smith. Don't be afraid of that, my dear sir. I should not ill-treat her if it were not necessary. Does she shy at all when she is out?

Dunn. Shy! That is a peculiar question to ask about a—

Smith. Not at all, Mr. Dunnbowne. I like to know what I am getting. If I take her from you and find that she shies at anything I shall get rid of her without delay. I shall indeed.

Dunn. (*aside*) Well, that is cool. He has the impudence to tell me that he would "get rid" of my daughter. I am beginning to dislike this fellow.

Smith. You see, Mr. Dunnbowne, I want one who will go ahead in the face of everything—a regular fast one that's the sort.

Dunn. (*aside*) What peculiar taste some men have!

Smith. Is Fanny ever troubled with corns?

Dunn. Corns, sir, *corns*? No!

Smith. I am glad of that. I don't care to see them walking lame in the slightest. It quite spoils their appearance. Is she quite sound in every other respect?

Dunn. Well, yes, I never heard her complain. (*aside*) What odd questions he asks!

Smith. She does not cough or wheeze, Mr. Dunnbowne, does she? She is not broken-winded at all, is she?

Dunn. Broken-winded! I don't understand you, Mr. Smith. Why do you ask so many absurd questions about her? You are not obliged to have her if you don't choose to.

Smith. I am perfectly aware of that, sir. I am simply asking

fair questions. As I said before, I want to know what I am getting. I don't want to make a blind bargain. Can I see her now?

Dunn. Not at present—she is out.

Smith. Taking exercise, I suppose. Well now, Mr. Dunn-browne, I'll tell you what I will do. I will take her a month on trial.

Dunn. You'll what, sir? You—you'll take her a month on trial! What the dickens do you mean? How *dare* you propose such a thing to me, sir! (rises)

Smith. Simply because I consider that it is the fairest way of dealing in transactions of this sort. (DUNN walks across stage) You have no occasion to be vexed at my proposal. I give you my word that I will treat her kindly and pay all expenses during the month, and if she does not suit me I will return her. That is fair and square for both parties, don't you think so?

Dunn. No, sir, I do *not* think so. If you have a notion that I—the parent of three blooming daughters—am willing to permit you to trifle and play with the affections of the eldest of them in the manner you have so basely proposed, I must ask you to dispel that notion at once and forever, for you never labored under a greater mistake in your life, never.

Smith. Now there is just a little bit of sentiment in that speech, and I must admit that you delivered it in a fair dramatic style, Mr. Dunn-browne, but you see the general effect is marred by my not knowing what you are driving at. What *do* you mean?

Dunn. Mean, sir, mean? I *think* I explained myself sufficiently.

Smith. Scarcely. You volunteer some remarks about your daughters. Now, with all the respect that is due to those young ladies, I must ask you to put your parental feelings aside for a short time, and proceed with the business we have on hand. Ladies are out of my line altogether. Between you and me, Mr. Dunn-browne, I am not a marrying man.

Dunn. Not a marrying man! Then what under the sun did you write me that letter for respecting your love for my daughter, eh?

Smith. Write you? Why, I never heard your name before this morning.

Dunn. (aside) This is very strange. Can there be a mis—
(aloud) Your name *is* Smith, is it not?

Smith. Yes, that is my name.

Dunn. Ah! (takes a letter from his pocket and unfolds it) Now tell me, Mr. Smith, on your honor as a gentleman, did you or did you not write that letter to me? (giving the letter to SMITH)

Smith. (reads) "Dear sir,—for a long period of time I have fondly and madly loved your daughter Fanny with—" Oh, rubbish! On my honor as a gentleman, Mr. Dunn-browne, I never loved *any* man's daughter, much less wrote this letter; besides, it is signed John Smith and my name is *James*. (returns the letter)

Dunn. (*aside*) I cannot understand this at all. (*aloud*) As you are *not* the Mr. Smith I took you for, and have *not* come to see me about my daughter, perhaps you will inform me what you *did* come for.

Smith. What I came for? Well, that's not bad for you after listening to all I have said. Have you forgotten that you wrote me saying you had a mare to dispose of?

Dunn. Wrote you about a mare!

Smith. What a forgetful man you must be. (*takes letter from his pocket—opens it and gives it to DUNN., who looks it over*) That is the letter; perhaps it will recall the circumstance to mind.

Dunn. I have not written this, sir. (*keeps the letter in his hand*)

Smith. You have not? On your honor as a gentleman?

Dunn. On my honor as a gentleman.

Smith. That's curious. Have you not got a mare to dispose of?

Dunn. No; more than that I never possessed one or a horse either.

Smith. Then why did you not say so before? You answered my questions about the mare Fanny and—

Dunn. Because I thought you were speaking of my daughter. You see I am expecting a Mr. Smith here this morning—the writer of the letter I have shown you—who is anxious to pay his addresses to my daughter Fanny. As he is a perfect stranger to me, and as you answered to the name of Smith, I naturally thought you were the gentleman I expected, hence the confusion.

Smith. There is something very peculiar about this affair that I — (*a knock is heard at the door, R. DUNN puts SMITH's letter on the table—goes to the door and opens it. Short pause*)

Dunn. What name did you say? Oh, Smith. Ah, yes, it's all right, Jane, show him in. (*turns to JAMES SMITH*) I must ask you to excuse me now, Mr. Smith. The other Mr. Smith has arrived. I hope you will hear something about the mare before the day is over.

Smith. I hope so, Mr. Dunnbrownne. (*takes his hat and cane*)

Enter, JOSEPH SMITH, R.

James S. (*aside*) So this is the lover. Ah, poor fellow. (*aloud*) Good morning, Mr. Dunnbrownne, good morning.

Dunn. Good morning, Mr. Smith. (*Exit, JAMES S., R.*) And good morning to you, Mr. Smith. (*shakes hands with JOSEPH S., who is very pale and looks very mournful*)

Joseph S. Good morning, Mr. Dunnbrownne.

Dunn. Take a seat, Mr. Smith.

Smith. Thank you, sir. (*sits, R., stands his umbrella between his knees—puts his hat on the top of it and looks vacantly before him. DUNN. sits L. of table*)

Dunn. (*surveying him—aside*) His appearance is not very prepossessing ; but I must not judge him by his looks. (*aloud*) This is a beautiful morning, is it not, Mr. Smith ?

Smith. (*solemnly*) It is.

Dunn. (*aside*) He is not at all conversational. (*aloud*) We—we—er—we have had, I may say, several beautiful mornings lately, have we not, Mr. Smith ?

Smith. (*mournfully*) We have.

Dunn. (*aside*) Umph ! He must be very bashful and nervous. I'll get a bottle of wine ; perhaps it will help to bring him to the point. (*rises—aloud*) I am going to my wine bin, Mr. Smith ; you will excuse me a moment, will you not ?

Smith. Oh, certainly. (*Exit, DUNN., L.; suddenly—SMITH looks quite cheerful*) Wine bin, eh ! He does not appear to be greatly distressed through his daughter's death. It may be that he has a large family and does not feel her loss so keenly. Let me see now, does he say in his letter when she died ? (*takes a black bordered envelope from his pocket and takes the letter from it—reads*) "2, Belverley Terrace, Hedgetown, March 31st. Mr. Smith. Dear sir, I am grieved to inform you that my eldest daughter died suddenly this afternoon. Will you kindly call here in the morning to make the necessary preparations for her interment, and oblige, yours truly, Peter Dunnbrownne." (*replaces the letter in the envelope and puts it in his pocket*) So she died yesterday. (*cheerfully*) Ah, well, *somebody* must die or what would become of us poor undertakers ? If everybody took a notion to live on from this time forward, the whole body of funeral furnishers would die of starvation. I hear Mr. Dunnbrownne coming, so I must assume my customary mournful expression. I always find that it pleases my customers. (*looks mournful*)

Enter, DUNN. L., with bottle of wine and glasses—places them on the table and begins to draw the cork)

Dunn. You will doubtless think it peculiar of me waiting upon myself, Mr. Smith, when there are servants in the house, but the fact is I never allow them to go to my wine bin, for I have discovered that they sometimes imbibe a little on their own account, in consequence of which I never allow the key to leave my possession. (*filling the glasses*) Now, my dear sir, make yourself at home. (*putting a glass before SMITH*) Taste that and tell me what you think of it.

Smith. (*aside*) It is not often I am treated in this manner. (*aloud*) Thank you, Mr. Dunnbrownne. (*leans his umbrella against the chair, and puts his hat and gloves under the seat—drinks*) This is splendid, sir. It is really delicious.

Dunn. Ah, I thought you would say so. (*holds his glass up to the light—drinks*) Is it not exhilarating ?

Smith. It is. (*aside*) He thinks more of his wine than of his poor daughter.

Dunn. (*aside*) The wine has not loosened his tongue very much yet. He must have another glass. (*aloud*) Have another glass, Mr. Smith, it will do you a power of good. (*re-fills SMITH'S glass*)

Smith. Thank you, sir. (*aside*) This is what I call good business; but I must say that, in all my experience as an undertaker and funeral furnisher, I never met a man who bore a daughter's death with greater fortitude than this man does, never. (*drinks*)

Dunn. (*aside*) Well he is a bashful fellow. Why does he not speak out like a man? I would commence the subject myself, but he might run away with the idea that I was anxious to get rid of my daughter, and I should not like him to think that on any account. How quiet he sits! I don't see any thing else for it but applying the lotion to his refractory tongue until the desired effect is produced. (*aloud*) Come, Mr. Smith, empty your glass and let me re-fill it for you.

Smith. With pleasure, Mr. Dunnbrowne. (*empties his glass*). DUNN. *refills it—aside*) I am enjoying myself and no mistake. (*aloud*) Thank you, Mr. Dunnbrowne, thank you. I'm sure you are very kind.

Dunn. Not at all, Mr. Smith. When business such as we have on hand is to be transacted, we must make ourselves as sociable as possible.

Smith. (*aside*) Now that he has mentioned business I had better take the hint and commence. (*turns towards DUNN., aloud*) The business that has brought us together is not of a very cheerful character, I am sorry to say.

Dunn. Do you think not, sir? For my part I do not see why it should not be.

Smith. Well, er—it was of your feelings I was thinking, Mr. Dunnbrowne, for I know that this event must be a sad and sudden blow to you.

Dunn. Not at all, my dear sir, not at all. (*aside*) His letter a sad blow to me? Pooh! I look upon it as a very pleasing blow. (*drinks and crosses his knee*)

Smith. (*aside*) He speaks of a death as though it were an everyday occurrence in his house.

Dunn. Such things will occur sooner or later in any family, sir. We must expect them.

Smith. Ah, that is true. We never know whose turn is next, but it is a great affliction when parent and daughter are parted in this way, Mr. Dunnbrowne.

Dunn. (*cheerfully*) Oh dear no. I could not expect her to stay with me always. Besides, we shall not be parted for ever; I can just drop in and see her now and again, you know.

Smith. (*aside*) Drop in and see her! What does—Oh, I see,

he must have a family vault. (*aloud*) Her loss will be a source of immense grief, sir, I am sure.

Dunn. (*in same tone*) Why should it be? All young persons are anxious to commence that blissful state of life, for it is generally supposed that they are better off—that is to say, they are much happier. Not that my daughter has ever been unhappy here, but the change will be a pleasing novelty to her, therefore I see no reason why I should be grieved at all.

Smith. (*aside*) How careless he appears to be about her death, and speaks of the next world as a pleasing novelty. A——h! (*draws a long deep sigh*)

Dunn. (*aside*) What nonsense to think that I shall be grieved because my daughter leaves my roof to begin married life! He might be arranging for a funeral instead of a wedding, judging from the mournful manner he has of expressing himself, although I must say that it is quite in keeping with his appearance. (*aloud*) Fanny has always been a good daughter, Mr. Smith, and deserves to be made happy.

Smith. I can believe you, Mr. Dunnbrowne, and doubt not that she will be happy for evermore.

Dunn. You will do your utmost to make her comfortable when you take her, Mr. Smith, will you not?

Smith. You may rest assured that nothing shall be wanting on my part as far as comfort is concerned.

Dunn. I am glad to hear you say so, sir. Remember that this is a great undertaking, but I suppose you have carefully considered the matter before coming here.

Smith. I have, Mr. Dunnbrowne. The responsibilities are very heavy in a case like this, I know, but I think I am quite able to bear them. When do you wish the ceremony to take place?

Dunn. You must suit yourself in that matter, Mr. Smith, I am not particular.

Smith. Very well, sir. Let me see—to-day is Monday—I do not wish to hurry you, suppose we say Thursday.

Dunn. Thursday! So soon! Do not be too hasty, Mr. Smith, let us take proper time over this matter.

Smith. Well, then, shall we say Friday, or Saturday at the latest? We *must* get it over by Saturday. It would not do to delay it beyond this week.

Dunn. (*aside*) Bless us, what a desperate hurry he is in! In his letter he tells me has not proposed to Fanny, yet he wants to marry her this week. (*aloud*) I am not sure that we could make all our arrangements in so short a time, Mr. Smith.

Smith. I can easily manage my portion of the arrangements, Mr. Dunnbrowne, and I think you can manage yours if you make an effort. We will say Saturday and settle that point.

Dunn. Very well. (*aside*) I don't know what Fanny will say to this. I wish she would come in.

Smith. Well now, Mr. Dunnbrowne, what church do you intend—

Dunn. Oh, I don't mind. Any will suit me.

Smith. St. Paul's is a very neat and quiet church.

Dunn. Very well. St. Paul's will suit me if it suits you. I suppose the officiating clergyman there understands his business as well as any other.

Smith. Oh, certainly. I am partial to St. Paul's because of the good and dry quality of the ground—there is none of that wet clay about it.

Dunn. Well that is rather a good point, Mr. Smith. (*aside*) How considerate he is! He thinks the ground will be drier to walk on up to the church door. I should not have given that a thought myself. (*aloud*) Allow me to fill your glass, sir. (*re-fills SMITH's glass*)

Smith. Thank you, sir. (*drinks*) I think you did not say how many carriages would be required, did you, Mr. Dunnbrowne?

Dunn. No, I did not. I leave that matter entirely in your hands, Mr. Smith. I have no doubt that you understand what is required better than I do, so I could not think of interfering with any arrangements you can make.

Smith. Thank you, sir, you do me honor. I suppose you would like to have the church bell tolled on the morning of the—

Dunn. (*stiffly*) Church bell tolled! Decidedly not, sir. What under the sun should we have the bell tolled for?

Smith. It is very common in these cases, Mr. Dunnbrowne.

Dunn. (*with determination*) Well I don't want to hear it, and moreover I won't have it tolled.

Smith. I am sorry to cause you annoyance, Mr. Dunnbrowne, but I thought you would like to follow the custom in such cases.

Dunn. And tolling a bell at a ceremony of this sort is customary, is it? Well I never heard of it before. (*aside*) My belief is that I have given him more wine than is good for him.

Smith. (*surprised*) You surprise me, sir.

Dunn. (*carelessly*) As you have named the matter I don't mind having the whole peal of bells ringing together. Engage the ringers for me, will you, Mr. Smith, and tell them to ring as many triplets—majors—or whatever they call them—as they like next Saturday.

Smith. (*aside*) The wine is getting into his head or he would never think of engaging the ringers to ring for a funeral. (*aloud*) I will engage the ringers if you wish, Mr. Dunnbrowne, but really I—

Dunn. Oh, I will pay all expenses, sir.

Smith. (*aside*) Argument is useless while he is under the

influence of that wine. I had better bring my business to an end, and take my departure. (*aloud*) Will you kindly permit me to see your daughter?

Dunn. It would give me exceeding pleasure to do so, Mr. Smith, but she is not in at present.

Smith. Not in! (*aside*) Who ever heard of a corpse going out for a walk! The man is hopelessly intoxicated. It is a blessing that I have not been prevailed upon to take more of that wine, or I should have been as bad as he. (*aloud*) If you will allow me to see your daughter now, Mr Dunnbrowne, I shall not have to come here again to take the measurements.

Dunn. Take the what?

Smith. The measurements.

Dunn. The dressmaker will do that, sir.

Smith. (*aside*) That wine again. (*aloud*) Dressmakers do not usually take the measurements for a coffin, sir.

Dunn. Coffin! What are you talking about, sir? Coffin! (*aside*) The wine has made him more garrulous than I wished. (*aloud*) What should we want a coffin here for, eh?

Smith. (*aside*) He is drunk beyond doubt. (*aloud*) To put your daughter in, sir. It is absolutely necessary that you have one.

Dunn. (*angrily*) Have you come here to have a joke out of me, Mr. Smith, or to make arrangements for marrying my daughter?

Smith. Neither, Mr. Dunnbrowne. I came to make arrangements for burying her as requested in your note.

Dunn. (*mystified*) Burying my daughter! Requested in my note! What does this mean? Explain yourself, Mr. Smith.

Smith. (*takes letter from his pocket and hands it to DUNN*) An explanation is needless. There is your letter asking me to come here and make arrangements for your daughter's interment.

Dunn. (*examining letter*) I never wrote this. There is a great mistake somewhere. (*returns letter*)

Smith. Then is your daughter not dead?

Dunn. No; she is enjoying splendid health, I am glad to say. But am I to understand that you are really an undertaker and that your name is Smith?

Smith. Certainly! Who and what did you think I was?

Dunn. A gentleman who wished to *marry* my daughter—not *bury* her. (*takes letter from his pocket*) See, I received this letter this morning from a Mr. Smith, who wishes to be my son-in-law—(*gives the letter to SMITH, who looks it over*)—and I was under the impression that you were the author of it.

Smith. Then your impression was a very wrong one, for I never saw this letter before. (*returns the letter*) I am already married, Mr. Dunnbrowne, and I may say that I have been a father on four separate occasions. But who can have sent this letter to me?

Dunn. And who has sent this letter to me? I cannot understand what—

James S. (*without, r.*) All right, miss, I know the way in. (*rushes in*) Excuse my abrupt entrance, Mr. Dunnbrowne, but I forgot to take my letter away, and I want to trace the hand-writing if possible.

Dunn. (*gives JAMES S. his letter off the table*) There it is, Mr. Smith. Apparently you are not the only one who is in a quandary about a letter this morning. This gentleman is not a candidate for the office of son-in-law, as I thought. He has come here in consequence of receiving a letter which I know nothing about, though it has my name at the foot. By a most peculiar coincidence, his name, like yours, is Smith.

James S. How singular.

Joseph S. Yes sir, my name is Smith, general undertaker and funeral furnisher. At my establishment all orders are promptly attended to. Kindly make a note of it, sir, you may require my services.

James. (*aside, piously*) May the time be far distant.

Dunn. Well, gentlemen, what are we to make of this dilemma?

James. That's the point. Ah! I smell a rat!

Joseph. A rat?

Dunn. Bless us! where is it? (*JOSEPH S. and DUNN mount on chairs and look round the room in an alarmed manner*)

James. Don't be alarmed—it was only a figure of speech. (*to JOSEPH*) Permit me to look at your letter, sir. (*JOSEPH and DUNN dismount from the chairs. JOSEPH hands his letter to JAMES, who compares it with his own*) The same, I'm certain. (*returns JOSEPH's letter—turns to DUNN*) Kindly allow me to see your letter, sir. (*DUNN gives it—JAMES compares it with his own*) Exactly the same, by Jupiter. (*returns the letter to DUNN*) It is as I thought. All these letters have been written by one hand.

Dunn. Is it possible? But what can have been the writer's object.

James. Why, don't you know what day it is?

Joseph. I see it all. It is the first of April.

Dunn. So it is; and we are nothing more nor less than a trio of "APRIL FOOLS."

DUNN.

JAMES S.

JOSEPH S.

CURTAIN.

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